

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD!

SOLEMN warning! To whom is it addressed? Reader, it is addressed to you. It may be the last that the God of mercy will ever give you. He has often spoken to you before; sometimes in the words of threatening, sometimes by invitations and promises. He has addressed you by his word, and by his ministers, by his judgments, and by his mercies. His next call may be from the throne of judgment. Oh, then, as you value your immortal soul, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart," Heb. iii. 7, 8. "Prepare to meet thy God," Amos iv. 12.

Consider the certainty of the event. You must meet God. Other events may be doubtful; other meetings may never take place; but from this there is no escape: "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. v. 10. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God," Rom. xiv. 12. Willing or unwilling, prepared or unprepared, you must appear in the presence of God.

This meeting may take place soon; it cannot be very far distant. If you are spared to old age, it will soon arrive. These quickly passing years are lost in comparison with eternity. But you may never see old age; you may never see another year; nay, another day, another hour, may usher your soul into the presence of your Judge.

Consider whom you are to meet. Not a man like yourself; not an angel, however exalted; but God! the infinite Creator and Governor of the universe; a Being whose majesty and glory fill the highest angels with awe; a Being of perfect holiness, inflexible justice, unchanging truth, as well as boundless goodness and mercy. Reader, he is thy God. Thou mayest never have acknowledged him as such; thou mayest never have chosen him as thy portion. Yet he is thy Creator, thy Preserver, thy Benefactor, thy Redeemer, and Judge. On Him thou art entirely dependent; to him indebted for every blessing, and to him thou art accountable for the use thou hast made of all his gifts. Art thou ready to appear in His presence? He is coming to judgment. "The voice of the archangel and the trump of God"

announce his approach, 1 Thess. iv. 16. "Behold, He cometh with clouds," Rev. i. 7. The startled world looks up in amazement; the millions of the dead are waked, and stand before the Judge in silent and awful expectation; and thou amongst them, reader. The books are opened, and the dead are judged out of the things that are written in the books, every one according to his deeds.

"Unto you God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning you away from your iniquities," Acts iii. 26. To you is this salvation sent, and at this moment you are reading the message of mercy. For in the words of an inspired apostle you are now told that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. v. 19. Whilst life continues, you are by this message besought and prayed as in the name of Christ, "Be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20. But "what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away," James iv. 14.

Consider, then, how fearful will be the consequences if you are found UNPREPARED! What shame and confusion, what consternation and despair, will overwhelm the spirit as it enters into the presence of the infinite Judge, with all its neglected opportunities, its unheeded calls, and warnings, and invitations full in recollection! What self-reproaches, what bitter regrets, what agonies of remorse, will convulse and tear the soul! but the righteous sentence must be pronounced: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. Oh, what a pang of insufferable woe does this sentence strike through the soul! and yet it is but the beginning of sorrows. The worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched, must follow. The sinner now finds himself in the hands of an omnipotent God, beneath whose all-consuming wrath he must sink for ever. Resistance is vain; tears are of no avail. It is too late for repentance. The day of probation is closed; his doom is sealed! And, oh, what a doom!

Banishment from heaven, eternal misery in hell! Yes, the bright abodes of purity and peace, where angels and saints mingle their praises and joys in sweet and holy fellowship, he shall never see, except "afar off," and only to aggravate his pain. Separated for ever from the good

and holy, his dwelling is amidst the "blackness of darkness," his companions devils and damned souls, "hateful and hating one another." Scenes of horror and sounds of woe, the mournful fruits of sin, meet his eye and his ear in every direction: it is, indeed, "a place of torment." Hope, that sweet solace amid the trials of this life, now dies. ETERNAL PUNISHMENT is written on all sides of this infernal prison, and is echoed in all the wailings of the lost.

Reader, is this to be your portion? It will be, unless you listen to the gracious admonition now addressed to you, "Prepare to meet thy God." Can you be so thoughtless, so rash, so hardened, as to neglect it? Will you give heed to the admonition of an earthly friend, and not listen to "Him who speaketh from heaven?" Heb. xii. 25. Will you prepare in summer for the desolation of winter? in health, for sickness? in youth, for approaching age? What! prepare for every earthly contingency, and yet make no preparation for eternity? Will you prepare a habitation for the body, which must soon crumble to dust, and neglect the never-dying spirit?

Is the happiness of the immortal soul of so little value that you can afford to part with it for the few uncertain and short-lived pleasures of this life? are they sufficient to counterbalance the endless pains of the second death? Oh, no, you cannot say this; you do not believe it. Why, then, not awake immediately to your danger, and your duty? God is now calling upon you; the Saviour extends his compassionate arms; the Holy Spirit, it may be, is striving with you; Christians are praying for you; the angels are waiting to rejoice over you, and are you only indifferent?

Do you plead your pressing engagements? What engagements can you have so important as this? This is the prime business of life, the chief thing worth living for; and this neglected, whatever else is attended to or obtained, life is spent in vain, life is lost—all is lost for ever!

Are you waiting for "a more convenient season?" What reason have you to believe that you will ever see such a season? The present is all the time of which you are sure; the future may be in eternity. If not, it may find you surrounded with more hinderances, and more callous to every impression of truth. God, in his righteous anger, may withdraw his Holy Spirit, give you up to your own lusts, and swear, in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest.

Oh, how many beacons warn you of the danger of delay. How many blighted hopes and ruined souls admonish you to prepare now to meet God! It comes from the gasping lips of the dying sinner, and comes up in tones of anguish and despair from the bottomless pit: "Prepare to meet thy God." It is echoed from heaven and earth, from time and eternity, and from the voice of your own conscience within, "Prepare to meet thy God." Now, in this accepted time, this day of salvation, seek the mercy of God.

We will indulge the thought that your careless mind at length begins to think, and your hard heart to feel, and that you begin to inquire, "What must I do to be saved?"

Most gladly do we answer the question in the inspired words of an apostle. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. Without him you are lost. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. Trust in him with all your heart, and you are safe. His blood cleanses from all sin, 1 John i. 7. Guilty as you are both by nature and practice, you need not fear to go to him. Though you have lived without God in the world; though you have been ungrateful for all his mercies; though you have been hitherto disobedient to his plain commands; though you may have lived wholly to yourself in the gratification of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16; though your life in the sight of the holy and heart-searching God has been full of sin, and an awful weight of guilt rests upon you; yet to you he says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. Go, then, at once, and commit your condemned and polluted soul to his hands, and you will find how freely Jesus can forgive. Then you will have a title secured to you of an interest in the everlasting inheritance, and a hope full of immortality.

And now, my friend, what is your decision? Is it, "I will prepare to meet my God?" or is it, "I will not prepare to meet my God?" In either case your decision is for eternity! and, whatever it is, THE RECORD IS IN HEAVEN, AND YOU WILL MEET IT AT THE LAST DAY.